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For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

MR. EDITOR,

IN common with those of our sex who duly estimate the worth of "lovely woman," and feel happy in promoting their comfort and security, I much admire the solicitude with which your cotemporaries have at different times published such hints and instructions, as seem calculated to obviate the calamitous consequences, frequently attending the accidental communication of fire, to the clothes of women.

The horror that instantly seizes the faculties of the sufferer (and of the spectator, if possessing sensibility) when such accidents occur, proves an almost insuperable obstacle to the application of such remedies, as are naturally suggested in the absence of danger.

At this season, when the cheering influence of fire is most necessary, the chance of such accidents is consequently greater.

Although it may be hoped that the care which the ladies generally take, to preserve their complexions, should induce them to keep a due distance from strong fires, it may be useful to remind them of the necessity of that precaution, on account of the danger to which they are exposed, from the lightness of the fabrics in which the present fashion has dressed them.

The "woven winds" in which they array themselves, even when winter,

"Bars the doors wi' driving snaw,"

are extremely liable, on approaching a fire-place, to be suddenly drawn forward by the current of air which constantly rushes towards the fire.

However useful such precautions may be hoped to prove, I much fear they are far from sufficient to the *prevention* of the accidents to which they apply. These generally occur in an unguarded and unsuspecting moment, and therefore no preventives can be recommended, with hope of complete success, but such as are calculated to protect from injury, as well in the moment of forgetfulness, as of caution.

Of this description *wire screens* seem the best that can be recommended, and are certainly well adapted to prevent the shocking accidents which too frequently happen to women and children; as they admit females to approach close to a fire, whilst they effectually prevent their clothes being carried forward by the current of air.

I know not whether your Hardware shops are supplied with them, but should suppose they are, having seen them used in your neighbourhood, of nice construction. If not, I presume we have artists that could furnish them. They should be made slightly convex, and have hooks by which they may be fastened to the chimney-piece, to prevent their being pulled down by children.

By their use, parents are relieved from the incessant anxiety and watchfulness incident to the care of children, whilst in a room where there is a fire; a circumstance of itself sufficient to strongly recommend their introduction into such families as have not already provided them.

Economists may object to the expense, but that objection cannot be gracefully made by those who have it in their power to apply the remedies we have seen recommended, of rolling the suffering person in a *carpet* or *hearth-rug*, to extinguish the flame. Surely those who can afford to use such expensive articles of furniture, may well expend a much smaller sum than would purchase either, on an article which may be the means of saving them from the pressure of an "unutterable weight of woe."

That husband or parent may never experience the calamity, which these remarks are intended to prevent, is the sincere wish of B. R.

Hillsborough, 22d Dec.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

ON MAGAZINES.

THIS word, from its original meaning and application, carries in it the idea of a storehouse, where is deposited various and useful treasure. How far the miscellaneous publications which have assumed this name, answer to the original idea, which their prospectus promises, their contents, from one period to another, will evince.

The valuable art of printing has given scope to the human soul. Genius, passion, imagination, and reason, have displayed their powers in issuing productions, as varied in kind, as they are incalculable in number. The libraries of the world are overstocked with books, from the huge folio to the half-penny ballad, suited to gratify every taste. In such a heterogeneous mass, much extraneous matter will exist. Intellectual and moral imperfection will become more or less discoverable. Many things will be rather calculated to blind, vitiate, and lead astray, than to instruct, rectify, and guide. A Magazine then becomes necessary, to select from such a multiplicity of writings, and exhibit whatever may be best suited to promote general improvement.

A large portion of mankind are deeply involved in the cares and bustle of life. They are more or less encumbered with high rents, and heavy taxes. The dues of the church and the state, should, and must be paid. Families require constant superintendence, and their daily expenditures demand a regular supply. Under these circumstances leisure for reading will be much circumscribed; but to peruse, for a few hours in the month, what, in all its variety of materials, amounts but to a pamphlet, could make no detrimental encroachment on the season of business. To recruit the human frame, fatigued with the labours of life, to prepare for further vigorous exertion and successful execution, recreation is essential. To what amusement can attention be directed with more advantage than to that which, while it refreshes the body, invigorates the mind?

Many large and elaborate literary works contain but few ideas. Some authors have attended to embellishment more than matter, and endeavoured to please the ear with musical sentences, and well rounded periods, rather than the understanding with substantial sentiment. Others display much dexterity in the art of dilation; barren in thoughts, proficients in verbosity, ambitious of making a book, they comprehend *parvum in multo.* Many large volumes of this description might be compressed into the small bounds of a few pages. It is presumed that a Magazine is understood to be limited to a certain size, and seldom carries any of its topicks beyond the limits of two or three numbers. Being a miscellany, it must contain considerable variety. Reason will demand that every subject introduced should receive some kind of complete discussion. A croud of correspondents, a multiplicity of passing events, an active world, and growing science will produce a press of materials. These will cut off all occasion of perplexity, and temptation to circumlocution; naturally lead to reject every thing superfluous and less important; and to comprise in the smallest intelligible bounds, the quintescence of information.

Though men participate of one common nature, completely homogeneous in its leading features; they yet widely differ in taste, dispositions, attachments, intellectual capacity, modes of thinking, and strength of imagination. The nearer that minds approximate to a similarity of powers, the better are they qualified to unite together; and, in their several operations, reciprocally please and instruct each other. From these premises it will follow, that, those writings must be most entertaining, one of whose prominent features is variety; and that any one author will most successfully please and instruct that reader whose soul bears the nearest resemblance to his own. That a Magazine or Gazette, not being the production of one mind, as most books are, but of many, is consequently calculated to entertain as many, and though there are other publications of the miscellaneous kind, yet, if written by an individual, they will please no more than a single class of readers having souls of similar construction. Moreover, the work that has been compiled from many good authors, or has been composed by a company, is yet vastly inferior to the Magazine, in the important consideration of not being a *periodical* miscellany. But why so much inferior? Answer, because man has such an unlimited curiosity, and insatiable taste for novelty, that, he has no sooner feasted upon, and digested one course of varied literary entertainment, than he is disposed to gratify his mental appetite with another.

A Magazine takes a retrospect of past times; it revives those valuable things that were ready to perish by the lapse of time, preserves from destruction and annihilation what was subjected to the corroding rust of antiquity, or about to be lost in the mist of distance; presents again and again, with no unnecessary repetition, those important subjects that ought to be kept alive in the world. It explores the treasures of ancient learning, and selects what is worthy of being modernised, and adapted to present purposes. It is a free and public stage, upon which imagination, wit, and taste may exhibit their fascinating powers; where genius may display his inventions and refined improvements; where learning is invited to figure in all her arts and eloquence, and common sense to perform for the pleasure and improvement of the promiscuous multitude.

A Magazine travels abroad for the patriotic purpose of making practical observation upon the transactions of the world, and importing whatever may promote the prosperity and happiness of that region which gave it birth, and by which it expects to be cherished. It resides at home to improve the agriculture, enrich the fields, and promote the fertility of its native soil; to ameliorate the condition of cheerless poverty, to encrease and enlarge commerce, improve trade and manufactures, to support the independence and national spirit of the country, polish its manners, improve its morals, and eventually advance the public good.

As the nation's official servant, it notes and records important passing events, as revolving time presents them to view. It watches the motions, and stimulates to repel the aggressions of foreign and domestic foes. It guards against damping the spirits, or injuring the health and vigour of the nation; by depicting her as distressed with evils that are only imaginary, or by giving gloomy exaggerations of those that are real. Danger is pointed out but with the view of urging her to meet it with stability and heroism. Her disabilities and grievances are delineated for the purpose of obtaining reform and redress; solely by the influence of reason, and the prevalent claims of justice. Caution is ever exercised against kindling and cherishing in her bosom that blind zeal and party-spirit, which scatter around them fire-brands, arrows and death. Disaffection and libertine phrenzy are not permitted to disseminate their inflammatory libels against peace, liberty, and good order; even though they should come forward under the specious mask of disinterested patriotism and public spirit.

Where a critical review of new publications is admitted, it unquestionably forms an important item in the contents of a Magazine. In the impartial and judicious management of criticism every author receives his due; whether he be an eminent personage, or one moving in an humble sphere, coincide with the critics peculiar sentiments and prejudices, or differ from them. A gratifying tribute of praise is paid to genuine merit; ignorance and insolence are exposed; what is injurious, worthless, or of immoral tendency is stigmatised as infamous. The wheat is separated from the chaff, froth and rubbish are swept away, and worth preserved; sterling coin is distinguished from what is counterfeit, and an attempt made to discover that alloy which intermingles with the purest metals. An opportunity is given for the advanced and aspiring student, to gain instruction upon the needful subject of English composition. The public are preserved from wasting their money upon those publications, or spending precious time in perusing those that are false in their theory, or vicious in their contents and design; or that are replenished with emptiness, though they should be addressed to the world, under the artful disguise of splendid gilding, and pompous titles, or recommended by great names. Petty scribblers, with all their affected cant of despising criticism, become afraid to peep from obscurity, while talent is called to exertion, encouraged, and crowned with honour.

Ballynahinch. S. E.

To the Editor of the Belfast Magazine.

I AM as unwilling to occupy much of your pages with controversy, as you can be to admit me; for I greatly dislike the spirit of controversy, and